

Macbeth – themes, characters, and all other background info you need to know before you write a practise essay for me

Send me your email addresses as I have deleted the group list

- sharonw@nayland.school.nz

Group Quiz – three teams from Wednesday

- Team one get ready...

Team one – name the character

- They said “I fear thou play’dst most foully for it?”
- Bonus – what were they talking about?

- Banquo — it shows he did suspect Macbeth BUT he kept quiet about it. Would work in an essay about characters if you talked about how character foils helped us understand Macbeth (comparing Macduff and Banquo)

Team two

- Who said “he was a gentleman on which I built an absolute trust?”
- Bonus – what are they talking about and what does this show us about their character?

- Duncan. Talking about the Thane of Cawdor and how he trusted him – shows us Duncan is a meek and trusting king

Team three

- Who described Macbeth as a “dead butcher” with his “fiend-like queen”?
- Bonus – why is this so significant?

- Malcolm
- Significant because of the way Macbeth is first described – talk about this in terms of STRUCTURE or how a character is GRADUALLY revealed to us

Team one - themes

- What theme does the following quote MOST represent?
- (complete and answer theme question – one point only)
- “I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent, only

- Vaulting ambition
- ‘the corrupting power of unchecked ambition’ – put this into your own words
- This shows us how dangerous power can be if it is not checked OR
- The idea that ambition can ruin one's life as one can become power hungry or become ruthless

Team two

- “”I am in bl____, stepped in so far that, should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o’er” (meaning to go back)

- Blood, **Evil** and its corrupting power

Team three

- “look like the innocent _____ but be the _____ under it”

- Flower, serpent
- Appearance versus reality!

Themes – a quick recap

- Appearance VS reality
- The presence of evil / the consequences of choosing an evil path
- Power
- Ambition
- Any others???

Appearance VS reality

- What helped you understand this idea?
- What did this idea help you understand about the world?

Appearance VS reality

- Lady Macbeth – “fair and noble hostess” 1.7
- Seemed sweet and innocent but helped to corrupt her husband - “look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under it”
- Macbeth - “brave Macbeth”, “valiant cousin” – “dead butcher”
- Seemed brave and noble but was corrupted by evil forces. Banquo acts as a character foil as he does NOT even though the witches prophesise for him TOO
- Big picture stuff – helped us see that even noble people can be corrupted. Ambition weakens even the best people.
- Witches – “fair is foul and foul is fair” (this quote in 1.1 sets this idea up from the beginning)
- Events such as the mousing owl eating the hawk – strong animals get beaten unexpectedly

The presence of evil

- What helped you understand this idea?
- What did this idea help you understand about the world?

The presence of evil

- Witches – set the tone as evil by appearing before any other characters
- Macbeth's gradual demise – how he begins to use ANIMAL imagery as he becomes more corrupt “We have scotched the snake, not killed it”
- Macbeth has been called a “study in black and red” – these are the colours that prevail and they can be seen as EVIL colours
- Showing us that no-one who believes in evil can succeed
- Upholding Elizabethan values of the day

Power

- What helped you understand this idea?
- What did this idea help you understand about the world?

Power

- Character foils of Duncan to Macbeth shows us what a just king should look like. Compare the two to see their similarities and differences
- Lady Macbeth is also hungry for power and it gets her nowhere
- People must use their power wisely if they are to succeed

Ambition

- What helped you understand this idea?
- What did this idea help you understand about the world?

Ambition

- “I have no spur to prick the side of my intent, only vaulting ambition” – it is this, as well as his belief in the supernatural, that leads MB to kill Duncan
- “You are not without ambition but without the illness that should attend it” – Lady MB about MB
- “You are too full of the milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way”

Get into the habit of making bullet point lists about everything you know around an essay topic

E.g a question about the theme of ambition

- Ambition – first soliloquy quote ‘vaulting ambition’
- ‘Art not without ambition but without...’ – Lady Mac quote
- It got the better of him as being king wasn’t enough
- Banquo killed because of MB’s jealousy caused by ambition
- As soon as 2nd part of 1st prophecy come true MB begins to plot “stars, hold you fires! Let not light see my black and deep desires!”

Outline an idea in your studied text and explain why the idea caused a strong reaction in you as a reader (THE PRESENCE OF EVIL) (pay attention to second part of qn.)

- Introduction – (rephrase both parts of the question. Address theme and purpose)
- Para 1 – **how the witches set the tone for the play**. Be sure to talk about second part of the question and also the readers of the TIME (hint, hint) (DIALOGUE, TEXT STRUCTURE)
- Para 2 – **how Macbeth becomes corrupt** - talk about the change in his character but also the similarities btw him and witches. All the things he does. (DIALOGUE, SOLILOQUY)
- Para 3 – **how the natural order of things is upset** because of this evil presence. (DIALOGUE, IMAGERY)
- Para 4 – **how things are resolved, and what happens to this evil** – e.g the fate of Lady MB and MB himself. How you reacted to this.
- Conclusion – recap these points in an interesting way. No new information but some good general points and societal observations